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ABSTRACT

Changes in authority relationships in the British government recently have had major consequences for the power of local administrators; a national report found an increased politicization of administrators in local government. This paper explores whether similar changes had taken place in educational administration. The effects of changes in authority relationships on eight chief executive officers (CEOs) immediately prior to passage of the Education Reform Act of 1988 are examined. Methodology involved interviews with eight CEO's of major local education agencies (LEAs) in the London metropolitan area. Findings demonstrate support for the hypothesis that changes in authority relationships have contributed to an increased politicization of local educational administrators. Widespread changes included increases in the following: challenges to established patterns of work, party control, party differences over school policy, and diverse politics on noneducational issues. Innercity LEAs experienced increases in the presence of full-time councilors, importance of the party manifesto, politically sponsored appointments, and CEO involvement. Variable changes not related to locale included leadership style and dissatisfaction with traditional committees and working groups. All indicated an awareness of their new power-sharing role, expressing both pessimism and optimism for the future. Two tables are included. (20 references) (LMI)

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ROLE CHANGE IN BRITAIN'S CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER*

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ABSTRACT

Changes in authority relationships in British government recently have had major consequences for the power of local administrators; a national report found an increased politicization of administrators in local government. Are there similar changes in educational administration? This paper examines the effects of certain factors upon eight chief education officers of major school authorities in and around London just before the Education Reform Act of 1988, a massive national restructuring of education in that nation that added further to these CEOs' role change.

By 1987, this group of CEOs could already report many changes in working conditions and in the influence of their political masters, when compared to an earlier deference to the CEOs' professional judgments. While role changes vary somewhat with suburb or city location, there is a common awareness of the new power-sharing role, a deep concern about the creativity that future CEOs can enjoy, and debate about training requirements for this role due to these changes.

ROLE CHANGE IN THE BRITISH CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

Introduction

Changes in authority relationships in British government during the 1980s were designed to alter the power relationship of citizens, administrators, and policy makers alike. This article examines the effects of those changes upon the chief education officers (CEO) of major education authorities, with particular attention to their changing policy and political conditions even before the Education Reform Act of 1988 (ERA) of the Thatcher Government.

Such changes in chief school administrators are not unique to Great Britain, however. A comparative study (Wirt, 1988) of equivalent school administrators in this country, Australia, and the United States has noted their declining authority in policy making. In these nations, despite different central-periphery constitutional arrangements, where CEOs had once dominated, now they shared power. Increasing education of citizens had brought with it an unwillingness to accept professional authority as the final word on educational services.

The evidence of role change in democratic nations is striking. In Australia, reforms appeared in the mid-1980s to control administrators by requiring greater ministerial control over some senior appointments, competition for the top civil service positions, affirmative action, and industrial democracy (Wilenski, 1986). Here, the Westminster model of administrative responsibility became a distinctively, maybe uniquely, Canberra model. In the U.S., school superintendents increasingly faced greater citizen challenge and experienced a shorter tenure in office (Wirt and Christovich, 1989; Wirt, 1990). Local citizen pressure has been noted in even that most centralized of structures, the education system of France. The *Inspecteur d'Academie* is still the conduit of national policy as it is applied to local conditions, "but he will have to act in concert with the education committee [whose] own local knowledge makes it an equally valid source of initiative and articulator of demand" (Howell, 1985, p. 50).

The change has not gone unreported on the British scholarly scene. For some time, Kogan and his colleagues have been effectively applying political science concepts to the "political" role

of local administrators. They reported an increasingly complex and conflictual environment for local decision making after 1970 (Kogan and van der Eyken (1972); Bush and Kogan, 1982). Hughes has further explained what this means for educational "leadership in professionally staffed organizations (1985, chap. 10). Laffin and Young (1985) addressed the "changing roles and responsibilities of local authority chief officers;" as professional advisor, manager, and "bureaucratic politician," they report an increasingly complex role. Moreover, management tasks have now proliferated because the local authority is simply not a tabula rasa upon which external influences work their way; rather, the local context mediates such forces with differing policy results (Greenwood et al., 1980). In short, in local school policy making, the politician, professional, and public now perform a *pas de trois* where once the professional danced alone (Elcock, 1982).

One stream of change is the non-professionals with their growing and direct involvement in policy making, for example, parents of children needing special education (Welton, 1983). Or the pressing needs for bi-cultural education is pursued by ethnic minority leaders. Yet another stream of change has been the increasing centralization of decision making which has been "destroying local government--British style," as a Canadian scholar put it (Ircha, 1986). In "making the case for local government," Jones and Stewart attribute this shift "to a largely invisible central bureaucracy [and] to control by civil servants who can inevitably be only occasionally controlled by their political masters, the ministers" (1983, p. 9).

Official attention to the matter was not lacking, either. The Widdecombe Report, 1986 (1986) was a comprehensive review of the increasing pressures on local government from those political masters which has been amplified by the party system and by ideology. The professional's advisor role, while still accepted and encouraged, was found now to be much more difficult. His roles of arbiter and professional manager were much more vexing among chief officers and councillors. Not the least importance of this Report lies in (the volume and quality of its research that drove its recommendations; it contributed to an opening up an evaluation of these administrators' roles (Leach, 1986).

But because this Report did not examine chief education officers, this paper addresses that group by using the Report's

guidelines. Specifically, we asked eight CEOs of major LEAs in the London metropolitan area whether they had experienced any of the changes that their local government colleagues had noted in the Widdecombe Report, 1986. They were interviewed twice, in 1987 and 1989, before and after the major national reform of education (ERA) got under way. This paper focuses only on the before period in order to demonstrate how much the CEO role had already altered before ERA. Most CEOs we interviewed had remained in office by 1991, but three had left; one LEA, London's, was abolished in 1990, and with it the CEO role. These professionals were remarkably and fully frank about the complexities of their professions amid social change, and their own words will illuminate the findings.

A Diverse Range of LEAs

The CEOs we analyze serve constituencies of great diversity.(1) These range from London, with all its riches and poverty, to a uniformly wealthy Surrey; in between were the mixed--but mainly middle class--LEAs, like Bromley. And the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), which was dissolved in 1990, is no single-class community; sharply different classes of neighborhoods adjoin one another (Heath versus Depford, Dilitch versus Southward)--indeed, the richest sections in England are nested within London.

The contrasts of income and culture are also striking among our suburban LEAs. Harrow has a huge share of class 1 and 2 status citizens, while Surrey's 20 percent of its children who are in private grammar schools may be the largest in all LEAs of Great Britain. Kent County is even more diverse--farmers, commuters, multi-cultural sites, tourist centers, and pockets of deprivation. Cultural diversity is reflected in the multi-cultural areas of Haringey and ILEA; the former contains people with about 200 dialects and 86 main languages, while in the second there is a Bangladeshi dialect not yet written. On the other hand, the absence of ethnics is a striking feature of our suburban LEAs.

Political control is equally diverse. Bromley, Harrow, Croydon, and Surrey have been domains of the Conservative party, ILEA and Haringey are equally strongly Labour, while Kent's economic diversity generates a partisan variation. Parents' political involvement in school decision making can be high in both wealthy and poor areas. For example, Haringey and ILEA experience much

community activity that is designed to improve services for low-income students. But in Surrey the well-educated parents are equally busy in demanding good education. By all accounts, in both types of LEA the parents are quite vocal.

How representative of British LEAs is this set? It might not reflect other parts of the island, such as declining industrial and rural regions of the north. Nevertheless, this preliminary study sought LEAs that were economically and politically diverse in order to see if there was any similarity in CEO experiences. This does not mean that the particular schooling problems of, say, a Surrey and a Haringey, are identical. Rather, our interest across community differences was in whether administrators had common perceptions of their decisional environments. If amid diverse constituencies, they report similar changes in their professional influence, then the argument is strengthened that endemic changes are at work across the range of British LEAs.

Career and Training

CEOs spring fully clothed from no one's brow but rather evolve their skills through an often itinerant experience up career rungs of ever-greater responsibility. Against this background of experience we can better judge recent changes.

Motivations on Entry

Our CEOs began their careers with little common motivation, often without particular goals. Teaching was satisfying to most but yet somehow incomplete. Most reported no clear expectations on entering this profession, even saying it was "a leap in the dark" or "I did not know what educational administration was." One suspects there was more to it than this; as Pinchin observed, "I had no goals behind this move except I thought the work interesting and liked to see things get done." One person shifted into it from another service due to its greater opportunities for advancement. A few recalled a power motive: "I sought power and influence--it was that simple;" "I wanted wider influence in education based on my contact with CEOs I knew as a teacher." Mann's sophisticated analysis notes that there could be differing motivations at different times.

> Early on, my ambitions were to succeed at something challenging and difficult; I liked puzzle-solving and so saw decision making and administration like this. A career as a school head meant then being a respectable conforming citizen within local society, doing what was expected, an enforcer of codes. But administration meant more than that.
>
> At each position through my career, I learned new things that motivated me. The power of administration to contribute to good education; the importance of the relationship between clarifying and specifying the ends of education in order to structure their achievement; and how the power of education can contribute to a better society.

So as a group they stepped into educational administration with no specific goal in mind but a sense that that there was more to schooling than teaching.

Career Ladder

Reports of their careers are the accounts of winners of the relatively small number of CEO posts in this nation. Within their first ten years of teaching they made the first move into administration, after the dissatisfactions and motives noted above came into play. None except Grainger taught where he later held administrative posts, and only one had held all his posts within a single area. More characteristically, CEOs shifted around early in their careers, but each move was to a higher responsibility or a larger LEA. However, one did move from a LEA to a schools council at the national level and then back to a LEA.

As junior officers, their responsibilities were quite diverse--further education, budgeting, planning, primary or secondary schools, and so on. Up to two decades were spent in this itinerant learning of administration before the first CEO appointment came; Naismith did make it in seven years, then being the youngest CEO in England. This career mobility and its broadly-based learning can be illustrated in the case of Jones. He began as an assistant officer in further education for a county borough council, then moved to the same position in a county LEA, and next became a district officer. In 1977 he moved to Haringey as education officer for schools, next to deputy CEO, and finally to CEO--all in that LEA.

These careers demonstrate a lack of specialization in any single phase of administration. Rather, over time their exposure to several of its phases provided an officer with experiential learning that could serve him well at higher levels of administration. Moreover, such training provided evaluations for other LEAs when recruiting for an administrator. But were there other forms of training than this learning by doing?

Academic vs. Experiential Training

While training for the American administrator regularly requires an advanced academic degree, that is rare in England. Only one of our group, Stubbs, had a postgraduate diploma (public administration, University of Glasgow). Another, Oatley, spent one year at the Institute of Local Government at Birmingham in a general training program for local government officers. More typically, however, in mid-career these CEOs picked up academic training courses of only a few weeks at Sheffield and Cambridge. Two others reported not even this; rather, they see themselves as "the gifted amateur" who had learned from "watching others administer."

The value of learning from academia is not an agreed matter among CEOs. Some saw it as work "directly related to the world he wanted to enter" (Stubbs), or as stimulating "novel management structures spoken and written about often since "(Mann). However, two others found this training of little use; they were either "appalled by it" or "found little that was transferrable--can't recall anything from it now." But those relying only upon their experiences expressed no regrets at their mode of training; observing others administer had provided them with valuable lessons in management.

Clearly, the CEOs under whom one served were key teachers in this experiential learning. But such training depended upon how much independence was permitted; after all, gaining experiential learning does not guarantee its quality. One CEO might give the junior officer no freedom to plan and hence provide only frustration, but another might provide opportunities with important projects. For example, Grainge reported with admiration that while at Croydon, he "had superb experiential learning from a CEO who gave junior officers opportunities to deal with a big problem, namely, analyze the problem, write it up, and report it to others in the LEA."

Only a few had thought about the need for academic training for future CEOs, but they were positive about the need for it. Noting that junior officers now often take such academic courses, CEOs regard this as much more important than in their days. Indeed, Grainge's training program, "action development," had been developed by his chief executive to teach teamwork in managing real problems. Under this program, junior officers from different offices analyze a current problem, prepare a report, and present it; half of these reports have been adopted. Naismith expressed what seems a prevalent attitude. While he had no formal training, "The old ways of managing won't do today, for one has to accept a deliberately managerial method and discipline in future generations of CEOs; the gifted amateur can't do well or even survive in this changing climate."

What is not clear is what difference academic training would make. It may be no more than just another qualification for later career moves--the usual "certification" attribute of modern professions. But currently there is no comparative evaluation of CEO performance with and without this training, or with their American counterparts, the superintendent. Such research would be of great importance both to the profession and universities. If there is indeed a demonstrated value, then universities and administrative societies would do well to promote it more aggressively; if there is no value in it, however, then non-academic training of the kind Grainge has adopted might be worth exploring. But the learning-by-doing method as the single source of training may be as outmoded as anything in educational administration in Great Britain.

Self-Definition of the CEO Role

However one had learned the profession, what did the CEO role now entail? Our CEOs spoke at length on this matter, not surprising when they had to act out this role every day. Their views were remarkably consistent, and go well beyond the textbook-ascribed role of advising elected members and managing their decisions.

All were aware that this role had changed. Stubbs cautioned against too ready an acceptance of the earlier CEO role as being "barons" unfettered in their discretion. Most others saw few "fetters" on them, though. This baron type was widely recalled by

CEOs from their own early experiences as junior officers with them. In that era, elected members were not dominated by political party positions or organizations; indeed, party members represented educational programs, not constituency opinions. CEOs would convince the education committee which would formally delivered the agreed plans.

The New Role

In both the earlier and modern roles, the CEO remains the same in some respects--"providing a vision, motivating people, and interrelating both," said Grainge. Providing a vision is crucial in working with head teachers and college principals; but elected members also need explanations of issues and plans in order to motivate their own decision making. In Stubbs' metaphor, leadership in planning is rather like a car's headlights dipping and rising along a dark and winding road. "He must flick between the short and long range so that the vision is coherent and the organization is kept on its toes." Mann saw his job as thinking about what will affect the service over the next 5-10 years, while his assistants did the same for the next 2-3 years, and many others worked with issues of the day.

Clearly, however, a new role has evolved in recent years. Now power is more widely dispersed, so that the CEO role involves much more coordination of the influential groups in the educational decision-making process. That is particularly true given the economic constraints of the 1980s. For one thing, CEOs must now provide, in Mallin's term, "a conduit between the CEO and elected members" because of the tensions within the larger LEAs. So the baron no longer reigns. Whatever the metaphor, two role behaviors are still central. One is persuading council and committee to change policies in a way that would bring stability and support to the schools. The second is reinforcing the school heads' confidence when their professional advice is ignored, while also seeking policy changes to help them in their tasks.

Even the management skills of yesterday have altered in a basic way. Thus Naismith noted that CEOs must "narrow the gap between popular expectations of, and resources for, education. They do this by better management of resources to correspond with educational objectives, and then evaluating what happens. In short, they must manage change deliberately." Through all their comments ran the

need for what they do best: advising, planning, managing, evaluating, and coordinating. These tasks require a set of management skills that are so generalized that one might perform them in another service than education. Yet these skills must be shaped to meet one's own personal style and local condition.

What may be termed "political" skills have also altered, in particular CEOs' relations with elected members. That role change arose because expectations had changed; the CEO was not expected to initiate policy which the elected members would then confirm. He may still formally control the agenda brought to the committee, but he must also adjust to members' demands that arise out of their party ideology and policy positions. Every CEO reported this change for themselves and other CEOs, regardless of which party was dominant in an LEA. We will shortly explore some of these changes, but here we note only that they often involved convincing not only leaders and members of the education committee, but also members of the profession. The CEO of an earlier era could urge educational schemes for, say, teaching that teachers would hesitate to challenge except on financing or staging. Now, however, all professions, even medicine and law, are regarded as fallible and hence challengeable by anyone.

Despite these new constraints, CEOs report enthusiastically on new programs for which they have had a major, often leading, responsibility. Mann put it most clearly; he was "surprised at the scope of the CEO to act as a creative artist acting with the discretion one still possessed." So we find these officials riding winds of change that no longer left them free agents (if they ever were); rather, they have adapted to working among competitors in educational decision making. That condition prevailed even before the ERA of 1988 authorized new controls over services than just the CEO.

Changes in the Decision-Making Process

Given these conditions, our CEOs uniformly understood that the job now required a new sensitivity to the political process within the LEA. Their words varied slightly, but the idea was clear throughout. Grainge and Jones are typical: "Sensitivity means being aware of what council members' political aspirations are." "This

means no more than being sensitive to other people's views whom you are with and then offering that sensitivity successfully to others." Moreover, this requirement was a continuing aspect of all that was done; in Naismith's words, it was "integral to the job, not an occasional quality."

The meaning of sensitivity can differ, however. Mann believed it was a function of one's position within the administrative heirarchy of services.

> The nearer one gets to the top of an education department, the more one operates in a boundary between values that are political, professional, and managerial--different value systems in each. And so the more that one becomes aware of problems in making decisions. A less senior person is consequently less aware of those problems, a function of the post you hold. At the top, you are working mostly among boundaries that overlap.

If one part of this sensitivity was an awareness of elected members' preferences, another part was understanding how to accede to them without surrendering professional integrity. In Naismith's terms, "The CEO must always work to persuade out of a professional background." Nevertheless, one needed "an understanding of the political order that limits the functions of the CEO and his authority" (Stubbs). In working with council members, "Knowing the run of the tide" was, in Grainge's view:

> the most difficult but most important political skill for the CEO to have. It is less possible for the CEO now to ignore this, even in writing and presenting reports to the committee, which is his professional responsibility. <u>This signalizes the transfer of power from professional officers to the elected members.</u> (Emphasis added)

The last sentence is stressed because some version of it appeared in all interviews, and it marked a marked shift in the focus of decisional authority in recent times.

Besides this basic understanding, what else does the new political sensitivity require? First, it was used with not only politicians but also the many groups now expressing educational interests. On any given day, the CEO's office held meetings of heads

of polytechnical and higher education institutions, of union chiefs representing blue and white collar workers, of concerned parents, of Whitehall members, and others. Consequently, these power-sharers must be dealt with in an awareness of the legitimacy of their policy concerns. But it must also be matched with a desire to advance the best professional leadership.

Besides reports of increased group pressure, many CEOs volunteered another aspect of political sensitivity--timing. Stubbs emphasized more fully what others referred to in passing:

> Most can agree on a list of policy objectives, but taking them forward requires sensitivity, awareness of one's superiors, sensing political currents, and judging their effects on other parts of the LEA. All that requires timing--when to press ahead or draw back and let a proposal mature professionally or financially.

How does one obtain this quality? From experience, not in-service training. As Oatley wryly observed, "I never had it when I began. Rather, I learned it the most from my biggest mistakes, for example, misjudging which policy proposals were acceptable to the council or community." Like others, he also learned from his senior officers who acted as mentors, both those who lacked such sensitivity and would crush opposition and also those who led by persuasion. Not all approved this change, but all knew that they now had to share if they were to lead. Naismith was especially enthusiastic about this new sensitivity:

> I enjoy working within a political framework. My job has less to do with the education of students but more with the education of the public. I must be the source of ideas that can be translated into practical terms....I also like the element of resistance in politics. One often meets with ignorance of and hostility to new ideas, but that is a particularly attractive part of the job. I like the work of persuasion, of convincing people of the benefits of new programs for their children.

However expressed, this sensitivity to constituents in the political system is the hallmark of the modern CEO, because he must now work within a power-sharing context for decision making.

Changes in Working Conventions with Elected Members

At the core of any political system are distinctive decision-making procedures for allocating public resources in order to satisfy private values. Decision making for education in the British LEA has its own distinctive procedures, but all our CEOs reported that they have been altered recently. To understand these changes, we focused questions upon specific interactions with elected members in order to determine exactly what had changed. These procedures included: preparation of agendas; giving professional views or presenting information to the committee; access of opposition parties and members to the CEO and his junior officers; and the role of political advisors. These items framed the earlier Widdecombe Report, 1986 on local government officers, and using them here permits direct comparison of political changes. Because in this section we deal with quite intimate matters in the profession, we do not use names.

Preparation of Agendas

The CEO has the constitutional responsibility to prepare the agenda on educational matters for its committee (Brooksbank and Anderson, 1989, chaps. 1-2), and in earlier times that was rarely questioned. But now some officers find that this autonomy has been modified in its context, if not its substance. Only two CEOs reported no change at all, but even here they noted, after probing, that "If it is a particularly sensitive matter politically, it will be well-rehearsed before [meeting with elected members]." Or "I do a self-evaluation of the items, taking into account matters of timing and political sensitivity. Some items I may then self select, and on others I may provide only information for members." In sum, even where constitutional discretion was complete, these CEOs were aware of the need to fit their preferences into the political environment.

However, four other CEOs were explicit about new constraints on their agenda control. One said concisely:

> I never consulted the chairman for the agenda when I began; the chair didn't expect to be consulted then. Now, I and the junior officers keep the chair informed, leading to discussion of items, which help me guide the agenda, so I will know how items will be treated at the meeting and

how the chair might respond to embarrassing questions. But I have never had items blocked from the agenda.

These new practices of timing and drafting reports appeared in comments of other CEOs. One noted that he discussed a proposed policy change with senior elected members in order to gauge their support but not to seek their approval in detail or in general. No CEOs volunteered that they would have gone ahead in the face of disapproval from key elected members.

Clearly there is skill in dealing with these changed circumstances affecting the agenda. All inferred that prior consultation took place, but one can be creative when members firmly proposed policy options that the CEO did not regard well. For example, one CEO would not explicitly oppose these, but rather would produce staff papers on this topic, as well as on related policy options, each with its potential costs and cuts in teachers and schools. While the elected member might dislike this practice (the media and parents could thereafter oppose one's own preference), it was a professional response that was well within the officer's control of the agenda.

But it is clear that the CEOs' constitutional responsibility has been shaped by the rising political turbulence over school policy, even in those LEAs where the CEOs still retained much independence.

Presentations to Education Committees

The presentation of views and information by CEOs to education committees' consideration can influence the agenda, but these officers reported there had been no constraint placed on this channel to decision making. Only one reported that a chairman had sought to see his papers in advance in order to pull them from the committee. That effort was resisted because, as most CEOs believe, they are not only a "servant of the council but also of the people" who have a right to his views.

Most reported having a free rein in this respect, although several had informal meetings with subcommittee chairs to discuss agenda items off the record with no minutes or decisions. Only one reported positive constraints; rather than providing recommendations, he was pressured "to present only balanced

reports without recommendations." This change in the CEO's role is important for some committee members because it removes him as a potential opponent. But the important finding is that only one of our CEOs had his presentations of policy recommendations constrained by the new political context.

A second presentation function--providing information--is influenced less by partisan considerations than by the information explosion, so much so that CEOs can no longer provide their committees with a steady flow of it; rather, they respond to cycles of information needs in an accordion fashion. That is, information papers are increased when issues first rise to the agenda, whereas shorter and fewer papers were otherwise the norm. But the main finding in our survey was that information to the CEO was not being blocked by committee members, although one CEO reported that he himself blocked certain details from the press (e.g., the percentage of students suspended or names of their schools)

Presentation could be blocked by forbidding that it be given to opposition parties, but no CEO reported this. As a matter of contract, CEOs are forbidden from attending any political meetings for any reason, much less to present information. Of course, the advice that opposition members need can be obtained anyway from questions raised in council meetings. But the education officers' presentation to the opposition can take place formally or informally, depending upon local practice. There was also some variation in how free the junior officers were to carry out this task. Some CEOs required them to report all such contacts but others did not. Such reports were required, said one, "in order to ensure a coherent response and to be aware of sensitive issues that may be emerging." In either case, it was information, not advice, that was offered. This interaction was mostly informal, without note-taking, "just talk," said one.

The CEOs' comments revealed an awareness that they must perform a task essential to decision making in a democracy, namely, provide information to citizens for their evaluation of public services. One CEO put it concisely:

> Some colleagues in other LEAs are under pressure not to go public on some matters. This is the kiss of death for the CEO not to publicize items. He has a firm understanding that, while delay is acceptable, it must eventually be made public. Also, the CEO must give an

> honest assessment in public or else lose his professional integrity. One takes care in using language, of course, under these conditions. All all, the CEO is under great political pressure to give advice that is crucial to the survival of local government. If he becomes just a party puppet, he is lost professionally and politically.

In sum, there was little change in these officers' presentation role, despite greater partisan strife and information overload. Control of information still remained as the central element of the expertise that is the professional's power in any organization.

The Political Advisor

Turning to the changing control of education by councils, note first one change in working conventions. There have been reports of the Labour party appointing political advisors to the main public services in order to impress party views upon CEOs and senior officers. However, that change in working conventions appeared in our group only in London. In the suburban, Conservative-dominated LEAs, there was no sign of this change and, indeed, an adamant opposition to that possibility; "I would walk out if they did," declaimed one. But there was evidence of these new political appointments elsewhere. How this change affected the CEO role is best seen in other changes in local governance.

Changes in the Local Governance of Education: Summary

In the changing context of the CEO role, we now turn to some dimensions of partisan influence drawn from the Widdecombe Report on local governance. We asked our respondents directly whether they had experienced personally any of those partisan influences The answers firmly demonstrated the presence of recent changes, although there were some important differences between central city and suburb.

The Dimensions of Partisan Change

These dimensions were a mixture of general versus specific changes from practices prevalent in former decision making. We

will first set the queries briefly here, and then elaborate on the experiences reported. In their LEAs, we asked, had there been:

1. a growth of party control of education policy?
2. growing differences between the parties over education policy?
3. emergence of the full-time councillor?
4. growing importance given to the party manifesto?
5. changing styles of council leadership?
6. growing importance of the local political party?
7. any challenge to established patterns of working?
8. problems with the "hung" authority?
9. political interference in appointments?
10. emergence of a wide-ranging politics on other, non-educational, issues in the council?
11. dissatisfaction with the traditional council committee and a turn to panels and working groups?
12. CEO presence required at meetings of party groups?

Summary of Responses

Changes in local governance were evident in even the grossest measure of the CEOs' answers that is found in Table 1.

(Table 1 about here)

Overall, more changes were perceived than not, but the perceptions between city and suburb were substantially different. Almost 80 percent of CEO perceptions reported changes, while the reverse was true in the suburbs, where almost 60 percent did not perceive change.

The nature of changes in these twelve dimensions are summarized in Table 2.

(Table 2 about here)

There were frequent reports of growing party differences over education and other policies, although it had not come to the point that CEOs were required to attend party group meetings (items 1-3 in table 2). However, more changes in governance were seen in the city than in the suburbs (items 4-9). These include: the importance of the manifesto, political appointments, party control over

education policy and governance, changing styles of council leadership, and emergence of the full-time councillor. Conversely, in two other dimensions more change was found in the suburbs than in London, namely, a challenge to working patterns and a new use of panels and working groups (10-11).

But the flavor of these dimensions of partisan influence cannot be understood just in raw figures. They need illumination from the CEOs' experiences which we provide in the order found in Table 2.

CEOs' Observations on Changes in Educational Governance

These changes appeared in the party role, leadership styles, and management. The CEOs reveal differences, of course, but equally obvious was the common concerns that they report.

The Party Context of Change

The growth of party control, which had spread from city to suburb reflected the CEOs' new power-sharing context. Distrust by backbenchers or party groups often prevailed; as a result, "Everything today needs the approval of all groups. There are diffuse focal points of power, and there is delay in decision making." Local government reorganization of the 1970s was the lever of this change by creating LEAs in new urban areas filled with Labour voters; as a result, new opposition arose to traditional ways of operating. Of course, either party can dominate a LEA. In some suburbs, the Conservative party had always been in control, although it could be divided over school policies. However, regardless of which party dominates, CEOs everywhere believed that, in one's words, "The machinery of the party acts to make all things much more political."

Moreover, all CEOs saw growing differences between political parties over education policy. Comprehensive schools and local government reorganization stimulated this change. Noted one CEO:

> Before and just after World War II, there was a consensus between the parties on such matters. Placing secondary institutions on the suburban fringe was accepted by both parties because the action did not threaten the school base of either party constituency. But friction arose later when the small grammar schools were brought into a

comprehensive plan. In effect, the politics of expansion (financially and demographically) was different from the politics of contraction. The first facilitated consensus between parties, but the second could not.

Party differences can be muted; one CEO reported that both parties had held a *combined* retreat meeting to discuss local and national school issues. But even where party differences were discussed in public, it was merely "shadow boxing," that is, posturing publicly as if in opposition but agreeing privately. After all, where one party is in permanent opposition, its policies would be impossible to obtain. The result has been "this silliness of a public posture but a private agreement to go ahead" on what the majority party wants. Policy debate can still exist within the party; one CEO observed this within the Conservative party between regions and within a suburban LEA. But it was clear that the previous interparty agreement on education has disappeared in the 1980s.

The use of the party manifesto--a statement of policies to be be adopted if elected and thereafter to guide council members in setting educational policies--is a very recent development, but only then in the cities. Since 1981, the Labour party has seen the manifesto as the mechanism to link its ideology, policy, and organization. But internal contradictions within the manifesto had cut its impact in the mid-1980s, and it was less heard of in committee meetings after the 1986 elections. Meanwhile, in the suburban LEAs, the CEOs reported facing no manifestos. As one noted, the Conservative party might present general objectives during elections, but later no reference was made to these as electoral mandates; they are seen more as matters for discussion than as instruments of party control.

This new party context has also generated a politics of non-educational issues in both city and suburb. This politics was noted by our CEOs in housing and social services (e.g., de-institutionalizing patients). Such policy politics can be muted under three circumstances: when only one party dominates (although intra-party conflict may be a substitute); when no ideology dominates; or when ideology is rejected as a basis for decision making. All three circumstances were noted among our LEAs. But these CEOs also agreed that the traditional picture of extensive administrator control had disappeared in most urban services.

In all these are signs of growing importance of the local political party in cities, although that is much less so in the suburbs. National Labour policies are pursued by the local party in large cities. But this national-local agreement may not exist for the Conservative party. When the ERA of 1988 came on the scene, it was early opposed--often fiercely--by many local Conservative parties, as our suburban CEOs reported.

Within this environment of more politics over service policies, what role was played by the elected leaders?

Elected Leadership Styles

Another major set of changes has come in how leadership is exercised. One sign has been the emergence of the full-time councillor. In some suburban LEAs, committee members once had a frivolous attitude toward a job that was treated as only a hobby, but they are now more serious and active because they are serving out of conviction. More of the convinced now have appeared on the local scene, especially in London which had a dramatic increase in the presence of councillors. One CEO noted these changes developing over his career in the bigger cities:

> During my first position in _____, councillors came to the central office only for meetings, and I rarely saw any of them between meetings. However, in my second position in _____, members were still part-time, but there was much activity by the chair and a few others--and on other than committee days. All councillors there shared one room for each party, rather like the faculty of a school. But even then they were coming to intervene more by calling me on an individual basis about particular events; they were becoming more interventionist.
>
> Now in _____, where once the chair had the only individual office while others shared facilities, now all members have office accommodations, and only a few must share them. Also, secretarial support is more extensive, and the top officials have their own administrative support. Now, these leaders will be in

their office all day long, every day; even some non-backbenchers appear every day for a time.

This expansion occurs not simply in London, as a suburban CEO reported. "My education committee chair is here three mornings or afternoons a week, plus five evenings a week. Others on that committee are not that busy, but they will meet two to three times every seven weeks between council meetings." So one change in this new context has been more active committee leadership and more members hovering around CEOs' actions.

The result has been a changing style of council leadership in the LEAs, but in cities more often than suburbs. The change may stem from ideologies but also personalities. For example, in a one-party LEA an authoritarian leader lost to another "who led from the rear by stimulating group-made decisions." He was followed by another who acted without consulting back-benchers, thereby leading to his defeat. In Labour LEAs, of course, leadership is more geared to the majority group mechanism within the party; such a leader receives approved policies from the party meeting. This leadership contrasted with a suburban LEA in which there has been only one leader for a long time with only limited party contact. In another LEA one leader had centralized control of services by only consulting with his governing board, but his successor decentralized service decisions to the board

While dissatisfaction with the traditional council meetings and use of panels and working groups were manifest in the Widdecombe Report, 1986, that was not obviously the case for CEOs. While two suburban CEOs reported some of this feeling, they also reported that a reaction against it was underway. At any rate, this particular development was not evident in urban areas. Dissatisfaction with the council structure did produce more working parties in several sites, but these groups have been reduced. One Conservative LEA encouraged members' involvement, so that many working groups did emerge. In this case, the committee meeting cycle was reduced from five to four a year. Working groups met in between in order to create more citizen involvement and to bring more pressure on committee members' time. But nowhere did this change seem to be massive, permanent, or partisan.

CEO Management Styles

As noted, there was a widespread CEO perception of a challenge to established patterns of working, most clearly evident in the suburbs. Other than the challenge from party influences, the CEO work was also more challenged now by rational developments in managing services. These arise from the structuring of forward planning (clearly mirroring a national movement), which generates more paper work about the financial and policy terms of service. But whether the challenge came from partisan or rational factors, the CEOs perceived a "tremendous challenge to everybody in this and other services. We have to work at a distance now, with day-to-day determination of management priorities."

Does the partisan challenge extend to political influence upon professional appointments within the service? All suburban CEOs denied that this occurred, but some evidence of it did exist inside the city. There, a CEO reported one such effort was tried, but because it had to be made public under existing rules, it failed. Nevertheless, there was pressure for more female and black appointments, and these were not always the CEOs' own choices. A more subtle influence may arise lower down in the administration, where candidates for teacher positions may say only what they think appointing groups will want to hear.

But in the suburbs, it was another story. Here, CEOs noted that political inquiries are not permitted at candidate interviews, although some effort may be made in a few LEAs to get politically favored names on the short list. But for almost all suburbs, "officers are expected to be political eunuchs." A candidate's rejection may come more from disagreements over teaching methods or management styles than over partisan affiliation. But it was likely, as one CEO suggested, that the Conservative party would want placed in key posts persons sympathetic to its outlook. In sum, the hand of the CEO in appointments, once untouched by any but professional considerations, is now brushed by the hand of the party primarily in the cities.

A practice even more rejected has been requiring CEO attendance at meetings of party groups. All but one CEO denied that this occurred, and the feeling against it was quite strong--"If instructed to attend, I would object in writing." The one exception involved a suburban Conservative LEA where the CEO had mandates of

differing strength. He had to go to meetings on education topics organized by the council committee, by invitation only to any working party meeting, but might optionally attend meetings of "nebulous groups" to discuss these topics. Elsewhere however, the CEO attended as a matter of preference, and then only to promote development of a new policy; even then, however, one would provide professional advice but then withdraw before political discussions commenced. Clearly, then, this is one element of the professional role that the CEOs have protected from partisan control.

In summary, similarities with the local government officer in the Widdecombe Report, 1986 are evident in the preceding analysis of the CEOs, although there are also significant contrasts. But what emerges is a portrait of a CEO role in transition. Their own attitudes about this change will provide another part of this picture.

The Professional Role in Transition

Personal aspects of these changes are important because they illuminate emergence conflicts over policy making and administration. How do they manage these conflicts? How do they get the training to facilitate conflict management? How do national currents of educational policy affect their role? These officers' estimates of their role are important in light of the changes noted throughout this paper. We arrived at such an estimate by asking them to judge their professional autonomy, their training needs, and the worth of their profession. Each judgment is a rough measure of what the job now means and what it may require in this new era of power-sharing.

Professional Autonomy or Dependence?

As our field work began during the first reports of ERA in mid-1987, these CEOs were already quite pessimistic about their future role and the LEA's independence. Asked about conditions in the future, the pessimism about their autonomy did not vary much by site. In their own words:

> The CEO won't exist in ten years time. [In that case,] *apres moi la deluge.*

> The CEO will more likely be the blank tape on which community and party write their wishes....By the mid-1990s, CEOs as a group will be more efficient administrators of the nationally centralized system and happy at doing it. But it is very hard to be creative when the scope of authority is reduced.
>
> Power will not be in this office but in Westminster, where it will be centralized.
>
> Professional autonomy does not exist now....Most key issues will be controlled elsewhere than here, and so there will be no major jobs for the CEO to carry out.
>
> This job will move much more toward management and managerial control, with the administrative side falling away.
>
> There may be no authority in ten years in light of ERA....If there is no authority left [to appoint heads], then there will indeed be a great reduction of the CEO role.

This pessimism was leavened by the belief that important professional tasks would still remain. As one noted, "The CEO, as always, has to carve out his sphere of influence within what is given him." After reviewing an early draft of this paper, one disagreed with the gloom of his colleagues.

> As long as local government exists, CEOs will have the capacity to carry out for themselves and their authorities a creative role. Many of the national centralizing reforms now being implemented originated in local government through individual initiative. This will always be the case.

The professional's advice would be needed on some matters, said another, such as "shaping the direction of policy [because] there are too many issues left that would fit within the member-officer framework." All cited the need for management that would still remain, whether in a local or regional framework. For example, management might be conducted only in accordance with national standards of pay scales, resource allocations, and buildings issues. Professionalism would also remain in deciding how new resources

might be developed and used, in creating forums for discussing problems, and in such tasks as inspection, in-service training, provisioning the schools, and so on.

Alternative Futures. These CEOs would often suggest alternative futures of changes under ERA, although little of its implications were known then. All agreed that maximum nationalization would leave the CEO with only the limited tasks just noted. The grimmest future was that "Little educational authority remains locally except for psychological and social counselling for those schools that have not opted out, with few schools left, and with policing the pay rations about all that the CEO does." But in even the most optimistic future, one of less centralization, there would still be greater fragmentation and individualization in educational services. The independent sectors of education would be free only within a national curriculum that evaluated progress toward its goals.

Curiously, either future would involve a return to the past of over a century ago. The earliest CEOs were less administrators than supervisors of national standards that were set by a national education education at Whitehall, Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI). One CEO recalled that his predecessors in the 1870s were actually solicitors acting as clerks for councils that would provide school services only where needed. The meeting of standards was the condition for receiving school grants, which were then monitored by HMI; later, a local evaluation staff would be developed. So these officers of today might take on the subordinate supervisory role that once existed and that is always inherent in a unitary government.

Future Training Needs for the CEO

Given a future of constricted authority, how should CEOs be trained? Our officers lacked any agreed view; these ranged from "By the mid-1990s, CEOs as a race will be more efficient administrators of the nationally centralized system and happy at doing it," to those having no idea at all about that future. Most believed that professionals would require training only in general management, because they would become only "heads of the paid service," "require a diploma in public administration," or "because the fundamentals of public administration still exist, this means being manager of a large organization." Implicit in these projections was a new role model that they generally disliked. This model, drawn from the

social services in Great Britain, took the form of a general manager without professional expertise in education.

Others saw the need for specialization but of a new kind. This would require dealing with the greater stress among junior officers that would be engendered by challenged professional authority; in particular, this stress would arise from increased parental influence in decision making. One suburban CEO reported that several of his staff members "have been on the verge of nervous breakdowns because of increasing stress on the job. There is now much more conflict and bitterness." Another saw a new need to teach his staff flexibility in dealing with more national directives, that is, in "reacting to new situations without becoming defensive."

Alternative Training Approaches.

When professionals differ widely over their future training, the profession itself may need to evaluate itself As one noted, "We now need much more thinking about these new things, [especially when] the problem is that the initiative is always to be left to others." If so, at least two types of training programs are possible, experience and academia.

First, experiential training--learning from performance--raises some questions. How much of this past learning rooted in an era of expansive authority is actually transferrable to a future of constricted authority? Or will a new cadre of CEOs develop with its own knowledge based on new experiences in the world of greater control from Whitehall, local boards, and parents? However, some political leaders might prefer the position to be defined as general management so that the professional in education could offer no competing policy preferences.

A second training for CEOs--academic--is not widely regarded in Great Britain; it has not adopted the Canadian and American practice of certifying such positions by advanced education degrees. Rather, we were told, there is little thinking about future training of this kind in a profession that is barely coping now with its new environment by using skills learned in an earlier environment of greater deference. However, our respondents did report that, as a preparation for advancement, their own junior officers were training in university courses, whether diploma or short- programs. Given the problems set out in this paper, however, one might expect

soon that conferences might be called on training the "new style educational administrator."

Is It Worth It?

At the end of this review of their careers, we asked the CEOs, in effect, was it worth it? Professional malaise exists when members denigrate their work. We sought for signs of it by asking them two related questions.

--If you had to do it all over again, would you still enter this profession of educational administrator?
--Would you recommend others to enter this profession?

The first question has an implicit bias; it is hard to question the worth of the effort one has already sunk into the profession. This is particularly true of those we interviewed, men who occupy the top positions in their profession. The second question, however, permitted the CEO to sum up a general impression of the profession's worth and to project it on others without casting doubt on one's own efforts.

Without exception, all CEOs agreed that they would indeed repeat their experiences. This was one of the few times when they spoke in unison and affirmatively about their work. Typically, they said:

> It has given me a very rich life, and my career has been a part of that life. Part was hard, but it was far better than working in the factory or mine.

> I have been very lucky in my career--with the odd bits of tedium and frustration thrown in. I have worked in a series of challenging jobs and been well paid for them, too. I've had a fairly good wicket.

> If the question means the work has been satisfying, the answer is--Yes!

But the question about recommending their profession to others produced another judgment and reflected a deep doubt. Only one was affirmative, two had "Yes, but" responses, two were firmly negative, one had "serious doubts," and the last two gave unclear

responses (unlike their earlier answers). Complaints prevailed about the excessive time now required for their tasks; others questioned whether there was any longer a scope for creative thinking under current government programs. One expressed what many had hinted at:

> I have serious doubts [about recommending it]. A crisis of morale exists among them today. There is a real question also among the existing officers. It is also related to salary strategies. I would advise people to think again because of the rapidly changing scene; much uncertainty abounds.

In personal terms, then, these were men proud of their careers but reluctant to invite others into a profession where the authority and creativity they had once known was increasingly constrained. Clearly, they did not believe that those who followed them would enjoy the kind of leadership they had known in an era when education in Great Britain exploded and then contracted, while its politics of decision making altered drastically. Most feared a future in which their role was only a general manager, efficiently following rules set by other and non-educational professionals.

The Local Government Officer and the CEO

We began this study asking whether the politicization of local government officers noted in the Widdecombe Report, 1986 applied as well to another professional--the CEO. We did find much similarity, as well as contrasts. These senior officers in education reported that:

Everywhere there was more:

--challenge to established patterns of working.
--party control.
--party difference over school policy.
--wide-ranging politics on non-educational issues.

In inner-city LEAs, but not in suburbs, there was more:

--presence of the full-time councilor.

--importance given to the party manifesto.
--appointments with political backing.
-- CEO attendance at party group meetings.

Uneven changes, not tied to locale, in:

--style of council leadership.
--dissatisfaction with traditional council committees and use of panels and working groups.

The impact of these changes on this professional was truly profound. Their current policy behavior and attitudes about changes clearly pointed to a professional role that is in transition. Their professional journal, Education, was filled in the late 1980s with distinguished CEOs resigning, with guarded references to increased politicization in the jobs under the ERA of 1988. Scholarly journals discussed the changing role of CEOs, head teachers, and the LEAs (Welton, 1990; Garrett, 1990; Maden, 1990; Brighouse, 1988). A summary analysis of the CEOs' position appeared in the Times Education Supplement in mid-1989; it surprising numbers of CEOs moving out of their positions due to the political stress, the cause politely worded as differences with elected members. These numbers capture one of the penalties of role change. But the ERA effect on the CEOs is another story.

Not the autocrats of another era but increasingly enmeshed in a widening power-sharing context, these senior officers are now unclear just how that role will develop. Both pessimism and cautious optimism are prevalent. Yet even under the most optimistic future, this will still be a highly stressful position--and still of great importance for education in Great Britain.

Table 1

CEO Perceptions of Changes Reported
in Local Governance of Education, by Percentages

	Yes	No	Uncertain	Not Relevant (1)	
Percent of Total (N=96)(2)	41	35	3	21	= 100%
Minus Not Relevant: (N=75)					
Total	51	45	4	--	
City	78	17	4	--	
Suburb	38	58	4	--	

1. Lack of entries came from questions not reached because of respondent's time limits (two cases, but only in last half of questionnaire), or because the questions did not apply (e.g., in all eight cases there existed no "hung" LEA.

2. 8 CEOs x 12 dimensions on which answers were possible.

Table 2
Dimensions of Governance Change
and CEOs' Personal Experiences

Strong Agreement That Change Was Perceived

1. Growing party differences over education policy. (8-0)*
2. Wide-ranging politics exists on many issues, not just education. (5 - 1)

Strong Agreement That Change was NOT Perceived

3. CEO was required to attend meetings of party groups. (1 - 6)

Change Perceived in City But NOT in Suburbs

4. There is a growing importance being given to the party manifesto. (3-0 in city; 0-5 in suburbs)
5. Political appointments to professional positions take place. (2-0 in city; 0-5 in suburbs)
6. There has been a growth of party control over education policy. (3-0 in city; 1-4 in suburbs)
7. There has been a changing style of council leadership in the LEA. (3-0 in the city; in suburb, 1-3 + 1 saying varies with leader)
8. The full-time councillor has emerged to supervise education. (3-0 in the city; in suburb, reported only for senior members)
9. There has developed a growing importance to the local political party in education governance. (1-0 in city; 1-3 in suburbs)

Change Perceived in Suburbs but NOT the City

10. There has been a challenge to established patterns of working. (1-0 in city; 1-3 in suburbs)
11. There has been dissatisfaction with the traditional council committee and new use of panels and working groups. (0-1 in city: 3-2 in suburbs)

Not Applicable Because Non-Existent

12. The "hung" authority has affected local education governance. (0 - 8).

* First number in parentheses refers to Yes responses, and second to No responses. Tabulation omits all Not Relevant answers from Table 1.

FOOTNOTES

1. Appreciation is expressed to the following CEOs for their generous instruction: William Stubbs and David Mallen, ILEA; Gerald Grainge, Bromley; D. Naismith, Croydon; Richard Jones, Haringey; John Mann, Harrow; Brian Oatley, Kent; M. Pinchin, Surrey.

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